

PROVERBS | DIRECTIONS FOR LIFE: WISDOM AND THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN
PROVERBS 31:10-31
2ND STREET COMMUNITY CHURCH
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www.2ndstreet.org

Welcome to 2nd Street, and to our tenth of eleven teachings from *The Old Testament* book of **PROVERBS**. Before we dig into this morning's teaching, let me pull back the curtain and give you a glimpse of the teachings that are coming up ...

18 April 2010 | Gregg Lamm teaching
PROVERBS, DIRECTIONS FOR LIFE: WISDOM AND FRIENDSHIP

Deep-spirited friendships don't just happen. They're the fruit of pursuing God's ways of thinking and living as a consistent way of life, instead of just as an occasional thing we do when it's convenient.

25 April | 2nd Street Elders teaching
SERVANTS TO GOD AND TO ONE ANOTHER

2 May | Gregg Lamm teaching
EPHESIANS: OUR BLUEPRINT FOR SPIRITUAL MATURITY
The first of a 22-part series through the Apostle Paul's *New Testament* letter to the church at Ephesus that will take us through 2010.

This morning we'll focus on the last chapter of **PROVERBS** ... **PROVERBS 31**, and on what a man by the name of **King Lemuel** has to say to us about ***WISDOM AND THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN***. Most Bible teachers believe that **King Lemuel** is a poetic pseudonym King Solomon used for himself, and that **Lemuel** was the pet name given to Solomon by his mother, Bathsheba. Either way, I'll just refer to him as Solomon.

Solomon is also the author of the next book in *The Old Testament*, **ECCLESIASTES**. And from the beginning to the end of **ECCLESIASTES**, Solomon only refers to himself as **The Preacher**. So why does Solomon call himself **King Lemuel** and then **The Preacher**? The explanation that makes the most sense to me is that since Solomon didn't follow his mother, Bathsheba's advice about just having one wife ... and instead, had 700 wives and 300 concubines (**FIRST KINGS 11:1-7**), he didn't feel like he had as much wisdom as people attributed to him, so when talking about certain topics he used the pseudonym **King Lemuel** and **The Preacher**.

PROVERBS 31:10-31 is an **ACROSTIC POEM**, in which the first word of each line begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This is clear when reading the verses in Hebrew - but of course this poetic feature is lost in translation. And I believe that this poem is part of the instruction Bathsheba taught Solomon about wisdom. In describing the **virtuous wife** and the **virtuous woman**, Solomon gives you and me a glimpse of what wisdom looks like when it's lived out in everyday life. As we go through **PROVERBS 31:10-31**, it would be really easy to make two wrong assumptions about what Solomon **IS** or **ISN'T** saying to us ...

WRONG ASSUMPTION # 1 ... Solomon is only writing to married women with children.

TRUTH # 1 ... Solomon is also writing to single women, and to women without children. So if you're a single mom, or a single woman without kids, do yourself a favor and don't check out on me this morning; because God's Word is speaking to you.

WRONG ASSUMPTION # 2 ... Solomon is only writing to women.

TRUTH # 2 ... Much of Solomon's instruction here focuses on virtues of wisdom that can be pursued and lived out by both women and men. So men, listen to me ... don't check out on me either ... because I believe that God's Word is also going to speak to us as men through these verses that are easy for us to overlook us unconnected to our lives and to the women in our lives. So listen up.

For 30 ½ chapters, Solomon and the other contributors to **PROVERBS** have spent their time ***DIGGING INTO, EXPLAINING, and DISCUSSING*** wisdom. So why do you think God had Solomon devote one-half of the final chapter of this book on wisdom to the description of and discussion about the **virtuous woman**? What does virtue have to do with wisdom? Glad you asked. And the answer is clear ...

Virtue is the fruit of wisdom. And the virtuous woman is the manifestation [or the *illustration*] of the wisdom of God.

And this is precisely why Solomon placed this chapter at the end of **PROVERBS** and why we're looking into it near the end of our eleven-week study. Because I believe God has some important lessons for us to learn ... women and men, young and old, mature in the faith and just starting out, those already in relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and those who haven't yet stepped over the line of faith.

We'll be looking into these verses with a focus toward what Solomon is saying about the **virtuous woman** ... her worth to others ... and to her family if she's married and/or has children. That's the first layer of ***SPIRITUAL TRUTH*** we'll uncover here ... but ***THE DEEPER, SPIRITUAL TRUTH*** Solomon wants us to discover is the value of the Word of God to all of us as intentional, sold-out, not-looking back, uncompromising, consistent followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. So I exhort all of us here this morning to keep our spiritual eyes and ears tuned in to hear what God wants to say to us about what He wants His Word to mean to us ... and how God wants to see us put His Word to work in the day-to-day circumstances of our lives as we press into it, and invite God to press His Word into us.

So, just like I've encouraged you to do over the past couple of teachings from **PROVERBS**, as we study these verses, you need to allow your hearts and minds to encounter, embrace, and apply Solomon's words on multiple levels. It's not hard to do this, but it takes intention and focus. And Solomon's teaching begins by challenging us to ask ourselves, "**What's the price of wisdom, and how much is the wisdom of God's Word worth to me?**"

PROVERBS 31:10; 3:15 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

^{31:10} An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels.

^{3:15} She [*wisdom*] is more precious than jewels; and nothing you desire compares with her. [*emphasis added*]

Solomon uses the same comparison in these two verses ... equating the value of wisdom, of a woman and a wife, and of God's Word to rare gems. And gang, here's the absolute truth, wisdom, God's Word, and the value of a virtuous woman, whether she be single or a wife, **ARE ALL PRICELESS**. Two other passages from **PROVERBS** that parallel one another when speaking of wisdom and women are **PROVERBS 18:22** and **PROVERBS 8:34** ...

PROVERBS 18:22; 8:35 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

^{18:22} He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord.

^{8:35} For he who finds me [*wisdom*] finds life, and obtains favor from the Lord. [*emphasis added*]

Solomon isn't saying that finding a wife and finding wisdom are the result of going on some kind of a spiritual scavenger hunt. He's saying is that finding either one will always be the result of **AN INTENTIONAL QUEST**. Seriously, you and I find what we're looking for, and we attract to ourselves, that which we desire and what we're seeking to become. And I see our **FIRST FAITH LESSON** this morning ...

FAITH LESSON ...

Jesus Christ teaches in **MATTHEW 7:8** that we find what we're seeking, that we receive what we're asking for, and that the doors we knock on, are the doors that open up.

Therefore, if we want to find relationships that are centered in Jesus Christ and not in self, we begin by seeking wisdom, by pressing into God's Word, and by cultivating the virtue of wisdom in our own lives. Then people who are seeking the same things will be drawn to us.

Jesus' half-brother James tells us in **JAMES 1:17** that every good and perfect gift comes from our heavenly Father. What are some of the good and perfect gifts you've received from God in the past months that you're grateful for? Speak them out for the rest to hear in this room?

PROVERBS 8:17 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

¹⁷ [*Wisdom / Jesus Christ says*] I love those who love Me; and those who diligently seek Me will find Me. [*emphasis added*]

Friends, wisdom is available to every follower of Jesus Christ. And sometimes the hard part isn't in **FINDING WISDOM**, it's **RECOGNIZING WISDOM** when we come across it. How good are you at recognizing and thanking God for the precious gifts of

wisdom and virtue He's giving you, either directly from Himself, or through His Word, or through the other precious, on-track-with-God people you have in your life?

Throughout the book of **PROVERBS** this is the challenge Solomon keeping bombarding us with ... to **seek wisdom, to get wisdom, to find wisdom, to recognize wisdom, and to chase wisdom down.** Because nothing else we desire can compare to **wisdom.** She's priceless. Let's zero in on Solomon's words here about the value of a **spiritually wise and virtuous woman or mate.**

In **DEUTERONOMY 32** Moses sang a song for the nation of Israel to hear. In **v. 30**, he says that **two people can accomplish much more than one.** And this is true for any two people who come together to pursue a goal, not just a husband and a wife.

It could be two good friends working in a ministry or on a project together. Or it could be a husband and a wife, trying to raise kids, which, as many of you know, is more difficult to do alone. Or it could be a single parent, who seeks out the support and wisdom of others to help them in the raising of their family. The application of Moses' words cut many different ways. Here's what Moses says ...

DEUTERONOMY 32:30 (PARAPHRASE)

³⁰ **One could chase a thousand, two could put ten thousand to flight.**

When we join with others, the power of our faith, and the power of our prayers are exponentially increased. Here's what Jesus says about this in **MATTHEW 18:19** ...

MATTHEW 18:19 (NEW LIVING TRANSLATION)

¹⁹ **I also tell you this: "If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, My Father in heaven will do it for you."**

And so if two people can agree on something in prayer and in faith, and see a good return, then the strongest union on earth has to be marriage, because the Bible says in **GENESIS 2:21-24** that when a man and a woman are married, they become **one flesh.** And I see a **SECOND FAITH LESSON** for us here this morning ...

FAITH LESSON ...

A lack of unity between you and those you're yoked with in life and ministry will always be an indicator of a lack of wisdom, and a lack of wisdom will always be an indicator of a lack of seeking and following the counsel, correction, and guidance of Jesus Christ.

If you're married, partner with your spouse in seeking out and following God's will. If you're single, be yoked with others following Jesus with the same passion and clarity you are. Unity is a must if *ANYONE* is to accomplish God's plans for them.

PROVERBS 31:11-12 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

¹¹ The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain.

¹² She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.

I love these two verses in Eugene Peterson's paraphrase *The Message* ... and they remind me of Solomon's father's words, King David, in **PSALM 84:11** ...

PROVERBS 31:11-12; PSALM 84:11 (THE MESSAGE)

^{31:11-12} Her husband trusts her without reserve, and never has reason to regret it. Never spiteful, she treats him generously all her life long.

^{84:11} All sunshine and sovereign is God, generous in gifts and glory. He doesn't scrimp with His traveling companions. [cf., **PROVERBS 8:21**]

Do you believe that when you trust God's Word **without reserve**, that you'll never regret it? Do you believe that when you seek God's wisdom that it will serve you well for the rest of your life? Or do you believe that God's like a self-serving, ego-driven, stingy parent - never coming alongside the needs of His children unless He gets something out of it first? Gang, how we view God makes all the difference in how we pursue God, and open ourselves up to God's pursuit of us.

In these verses Kings David and Solomon accurately describe the power and beauty of a husband-wife relationship where God is at the center. And I believe that they're also an accurate description of the power and beauty of our friend-to-friend relationships where God is at the center.

Now women, before you get overwhelmed about what Solomon is calling you to, take a deep breath, and know that he's not asking you to become a perfectionist, a codependent, a workaholic, or a nitpicker. Recently I ran across an article written by Rebekah Montgomery, entitled, "***Please Don't Tell Me The Proverbs 31 Woman Wears A Size 8.***" Here's an excerpt from that piece ...

It is bad enough that Barbie permanently warped my image of what a real woman should look like, but once upon a time, the **PROVERBS 31 WOMAN** made me feel inadequate and inefficient in every other area of my life. You remember the **PROVERBS 31 WOMAN**. She's the lady whose resume reads like a turbocharged Martha Stewart. For years, the only way I could actually get out of bed was to imagine that the **PROVERBS 31 WOMAN** had really big thighs. That way, at least, we had something in common.

If it sounds like I had a grudge against her, I guess I did. I developed a case of **PROVERBS 31 WOMAN ENVY** one Mother's Day when my kids were small. Between children, husband, housework, church, and a job, I was frantically running to keep up. So on Mother's Day, when I slid into my pew - late and exhausted - and listened to a sermon about the **PROVERBS 31 WOMAN** who did everything with easy competency, my corsage - and spirits - wilted.

The more I listened, the more depressed I got. If the pastor would have told me that the *VIRTUOUS WOMAN* wore a size 8, I think I would have given up on the spot. I would never measure up. Unless I dressed the kids the night before and stored them in Tupperware I couldn't even get to church on time - let alone doing all that spinning, running a vineyard, and being noble.

I must admit, however, that over time, I've learned to appreciate the *VIRTUOUS WOMAN* and cut myself a little slack. A careful reading of the text reveals that she wasn't doing all of those things at the same time. She was a woman of many interests and we're being given an overview of her entire life.

Also, it's not the *VIRTUOUS WOMAN'S* accomplishments that set her apart ... it's her wise, servant's heart that makes her remarkable. She's not worried about who gets the credit. Instead, she appraises needs and responds wholeheartedly with the capacities God has given her. What does a modern *VIRTUOUS WOMAN* look like? I suspect she may not even recognize herself.

One frosty Saturday morning, I gathered the female movers and shakers from our local church into my home. If anything happened - Bible schools, mission conferences, funeral dinners, Sunday School classes taught, a frozen turkey bought for the pastor at Christmas - these were the women who did it.

Over coffee and snacks, I asked them about their needs as the female leaders in the church. They were thunderstruck! They didn't consider themselves to be *LEADERS*. Not in the least! They thought of themselves as *SERVANTS*. In their own way, they were competently doing everything church *LEADERS* do - teaching, sharing the Gospel, visiting the sick and elderly, planning and carrying out ministries, turning their wallets inside out to meet the budget - only please, don't call them "*LEADERS*."

And these women aren't alone in their service. Like the *VIRTUOUS WOMAN*, they were doing what needed to be done to the best of their abilities. Their love for God and people set them on their Mission of life.

And that is what is considered praiseworthy about the *VIRTUOUS WOMEN* ... vv. 29-30 ... "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all ... but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised." And that's a whole lot better than wearing a size 8.

In vv. 13-18 Solomon describes the industriousness of wise and virtuous women ... how they stay on task, accomplishing what needs to be done with a sense of purpose and happiness. Solomon also says that the way you can tell a woman has wisdom with regard to money - is when you see that *SHE HAS CONTROL OF IT, INSTEAD OF IT HAVING CONTROL OF HER* ... a skill and a gift, which again, builds trust and security at the foundational level of all relationships. Let's look at PROVERBS 31:13-18 ...

PROVERBS 31:13-18 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

- ¹³ She looks for wool and flax and works with her hands in delight.
¹⁴ She is like merchant ships; she brings her food from afar.
¹⁵ She rises also while it is still night and gives food to her household and portions to her maidens.
¹⁶ She considers a field and buys it; from her earnings she plants a vineyard.
¹⁷ She girds herself with strength and makes her arms strong.
¹⁸ She senses that her gain is good; her lamp does not go out at night.

The strength spoken of in v. 17 has more to do with spiritual strength, than it does with physical strength. The virtuous woman is full of God's Word, and that's how she's been equipped to accomplish all that she does ... because like Nehemiah wrote in NEHEMIAH 8:10, the joy of the Lord is [her] strength. It's not just that she works harder. It's that a virtuous woman partners first and foremost with God in accomplishing what He calls her to put her hands, her heart, and her resources to.

I love how Solomon talks in vv. 19-20 about how a woman of virtue always allows God to press and weave His priorities into her life.

PROVERBS 31:19-20 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

- ¹⁹ She stretches out her hands to the distaff, and her hands grasp the spindle. [a *distaff* is a tool used in the spinning of wool or flax]
²⁰ She extends her hand to the poor, and she stretches out her hands to the needy.

I also love how that even when the virtuous woman's hand is caring for those she loves, she's also attentive to the needs of others, and seeks God for who He wants her to come alongside and lift up. And here's our **THIRD FAITH LESSON** ...

FAITH LESSON ...

Without the wisdom of God's Word growing and maturing us, our priorities will always be out of whack ... and we'll spend time, energy and money doing things we're not called to do ... even helping people we're not called by God to help. Wisdom focuses and directs us. Without wisdom we're like a ship without a rudder.

Here's a definition for *sailing* I read years ago ...

Sailing: The fine art of getting wet while going nowhere slowly at great expense.

And gang, that's a great definition of you and me when we make the choice to live life without the rudder of God's wisdom firmly attached to our lives, to our priorities, and to the shaping of our character. In vv. 21-23, Solomon talks about the

righteousness and beauty of wisdom, and that when God's wisdom is guiding and ruling us, **WE'LL BE GIVERS, NOT JUST TAKERS.**

PROVERBS 31:21-23 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

²¹ She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet.

²² She makes coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple.

²³ Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land.

The Hebrew word for scarlet in v. 21 is interesting. Much of the time in *The Old Testament*, the word translated scarlet is towla, which is the Hebrew name for a very particular kind of worm. Okay Gregg, what does that have to do with the virtuous woman making a covering for herself, or clothing for her family? Glad you asked.

ILLUSTRATION ... The towla was a rare kind of worm in the ancient world and only the royal family was allowed to own it and use it. The blood of the towla was a very unique shade of red, and when it was crushed, its blood was extracted to make a very special scarlet dye that was exclusively reserved for making clothing for the royal family. Creepy, weird, interesting, **AND** important.

In PSALM 22:6 David used the word towla when he spoke prophetically about the crucifixion of Jesus ... **But I am a worm and not a man, a reproach of men and despised by the people.** It was when Jesus hung on the cross that He was despised by all people. So when Jesus (through the words of King David), said, "I am a towla," He meant that when He went to the cross, He'd be crushed by the weight of our sins. And that when His blood was poured out, you and I were the ones who would walk away free from our sin, and clothed in "scarlet" ... in the garments of royalty!

PROVERBS 31:24-27 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

²⁴ She makes linen garments and sells *them*, and supplies belts to the tradesmen.

²⁵ Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she smiles at the future.

²⁶ She opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

²⁷ She looks well to the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.

Again, the virtuous woman symbolizes or illustrates the virtue and the character of Jesus Christ, and of God's Word, and of the way God wants to use His wisdom in our lives to transform our character. When we know Jesus Christ, when we're spending time in God's Word, meditating on it when we get up in the morning, throughout the day, and when we go to bed at night, **WE'LL BECOME** examples of the people Jesus taught about in MATTHEW 6:33 when He told us that when we seek first the Kingdom of God, God will take care of meeting all the rest of our needs out of His resources, and in His timing.

MATTHEW 6:33 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

³³ Seek first God's kingdom and what God wants. Then all your other needs will be met as well.

I love seeing the fruits of **dignity, strength, and kindness** expressed in **PROVERBS 31:24-27**. What a great reminder about the spiritual truth of **sowing and reaping** (cf., **GALATIANS 6:6-18**) and that when you and I are **sowing** into this life the things that are on God's heart, and doing in this life, the things that God wants us to do, we'll begin reaping the **character, strength, dignity, and kindness** of Jesus Christ.

PROVERBS 31:28-31 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

²⁸ Her children rise up and bless her; her husband *also*, and he praises her, *saying*:

²⁹ "Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all."

³⁰ Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, *but* a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.

³¹ Give her the product of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.

Have you ever tried to hang onto something that wasn't worth hanging onto, or onto something that nobody can hang onto anyway? I love **v. 30** for how it puts into perspective the differences between what has eternal value and what will always fade away ... **Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord shall be praised** ... nothing is more beautiful than a woman, or anyone for that matter, who has the discernment to know the difference between the temporal and the eternal. Oh, that 2nd Street would be full of this kind of people ... women and men full of wisdom and discernment about what to hang onto and what to let go of.

Husbands, if you've been listening to this teaching this morning and asking, "Is there anything I do to help my wife become more like the virtuous woman described in **PROVERBS 31?**" Yes, there is. In **EPHESIANS 5**, the Apostle Paul unveils the truth that **the church is the bride of Christ**. Men and women alike - everyone who makes up the church is **the bride of Christ**. Men, you're a **bride**. Get over it. God gets to choose the metaphors in the Bible, not us! But the challenge is that when we first come into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, there's not one of us that's that great of a **bride** - certainly not the kind anybody would want to bring home to meet their folks!

Our **SINFULNESS**, our **WEAKNESSES**, our **FAULTS**, our **BROKENNESS**, our **BLEMISHES**, and our **SHORTCOMINGS** are very real, and very visible. And to those of you who think yours aren't real and visible, you're only kidding yourself. And yet, through the years after beginning a relationship with Jesus ... the more of the character of Jesus Christ we take on ... the more of Him there is, and the less of us there is ... the more we become what God has in mind for us to become ... the more we begin to **THINK** like Jesus Christ, and **TALK** like Jesus Christ, and **ACT** like Jesus Christ ... the more we begin to **PRIORITIZE** our lives after the priorities of Jesus Christ ... the more this

TRANSFORMATION takes place, the more we begin to **RESEMBLE** the bride that God has in mind for us to become. Turn with me to **EPHESIANS 5:25-28** ...

EPHESIANS 5:25-28 (ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION)

²⁵⁻²⁶ **Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word,**

²⁷⁻²⁸ **so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.**

Jesus Christ transforms His bride - you and me - by **cleansing us with the washing of water with the Word (v. 26)**. The Greek word for word in **v. 26** is rhema, which means an utterance. Gang, Jesus wants to wash us, and cleanse us with His **SPOKEN, UTTERED** Word. And throughout Jesus' three years of life and ministry here on earth, one of the things we learned about Him was that **HE NEVER SPOKE WHAT HE SAW, HE SPOKE WHAT HE BELIEVED**. And this is the answer for us too. Let me explain what I mean.

How do we come alongside Jesus Christ, and God's Word, and the wisdom of God, and help our wives, our husbands, and the other people God brings into your lives continue on the journey of transformation? **BY BUILDING UP, NOT TEARING DOWN**.

Just like none of us will ever get clean washing with dirty water, so too, griping, complaining, nagging, or yelling won't bring about the cleansing the Paul is talking about and calling us to experience here. And so if the woman in your life ... your wife, your friend, your sister, your momma, your grandma, or your aunt, or anybody for that matter ... if they don't measure up to the standard set forth in **PROVERBS 31**, don't criticize them for it. Just love them. Because **LOVE + TIME = CHANGE**.

We've been studying the book of **PROVERBS** because there's never been a time of greater need for the people of God to have and live out the wisdom of God, which again is the person of Jesus Christ, and the Word of God. Let's close by reading **SECOND TIMOTHY 3:16-17** together ... and invite these words from the Apostle Paul to remind us of how God wants to use His Word in our lives.

SECOND TIMOTHY 3:16-17 (NEW LIVING TRANSLATION)

¹⁶⁻¹⁷ **All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip His people to do every good work.**

This is what will happen as we study, meditate on, and get into God's Word - and as we invite God's Word to get into us. **God will use it to prepare and equip us for every good work He has planned for us to do**. Doesn't that sound excellent? Isn't that what you want to see God do in your life? And like it was said of Jesus Christ

when He was a young man, the more God's truth is pounded into us, the more you and I will continue to **become wise and grow strong**. (cf., LUKE 2:52). Blessed be the Word of the LORD.

Like I said at the beginning of this morning's teaching, many Bible scholars have suggested that as Solomon wrote PROVERBS 31:10-31 he was reflecting on his own mother, Bathsheba. And if that's the case, then we should all be encouraged.

Because in case you don't remember the story of how David and Bathsheba hooked up, it could hardly be called **one of the more virtuous courtships in the pages of Scripture**. And you and I aren't that unlike her, are we? Because it's lives, and our stories, and our choices, that God had *The Old Testament* prophet Isaiah describe in ISAIAH 53:6, and *The New Testament* Apostle Paul describe in ROMANS 3:23 ...

ISAIAH 53:6; ROMANS 3:23

ISAIAH 53:6 **We're all like sheep who've wandered off and gotten lost. We've all done our own thing, gone our own way. And God has piled all our sins, everything we've done wrong, on Hlm, on Him [*on Jesus Christ*]. [emphasis added] (THE MESSAGE)**

ROMANS 3:23 **Everyone [*including you and me*] has sinned and fallen short of God's glorious standard. [emphasis added] (NEW CENTURY VERSION)**

And yet, just like Bathsheba, you and I can become wise, virtuous, and full of God's Word, when we start clothing ourselves in the virtue and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Oh, glory to God!

NEXT SUNDAY, 18 APRIL 2010 ... PROVERBS, DIRECTIONS FOR LIFE: WISDOM AND FRIENDSHIP (PROVERBS 18:24; 27:6-19). COME PRAYING AND EXPECTING!